

The Line Between: Questions, Responses, and Critical Reading

This session introduces the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) framework for building readers' confidence in locating specific information in a text or turning to themselves to answer questions that require thinking beyond the text.

In this webinar, we will:

- review research on how building reading strategies can also enhance students' comprehension
- explore four QAR questions categories and steps for applying this approach in classrooms
- consider why skills developed through the QAR framework are relevant to the media literacy requirements of today's complex information landscape



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



Spencer Salas, Ph.D.



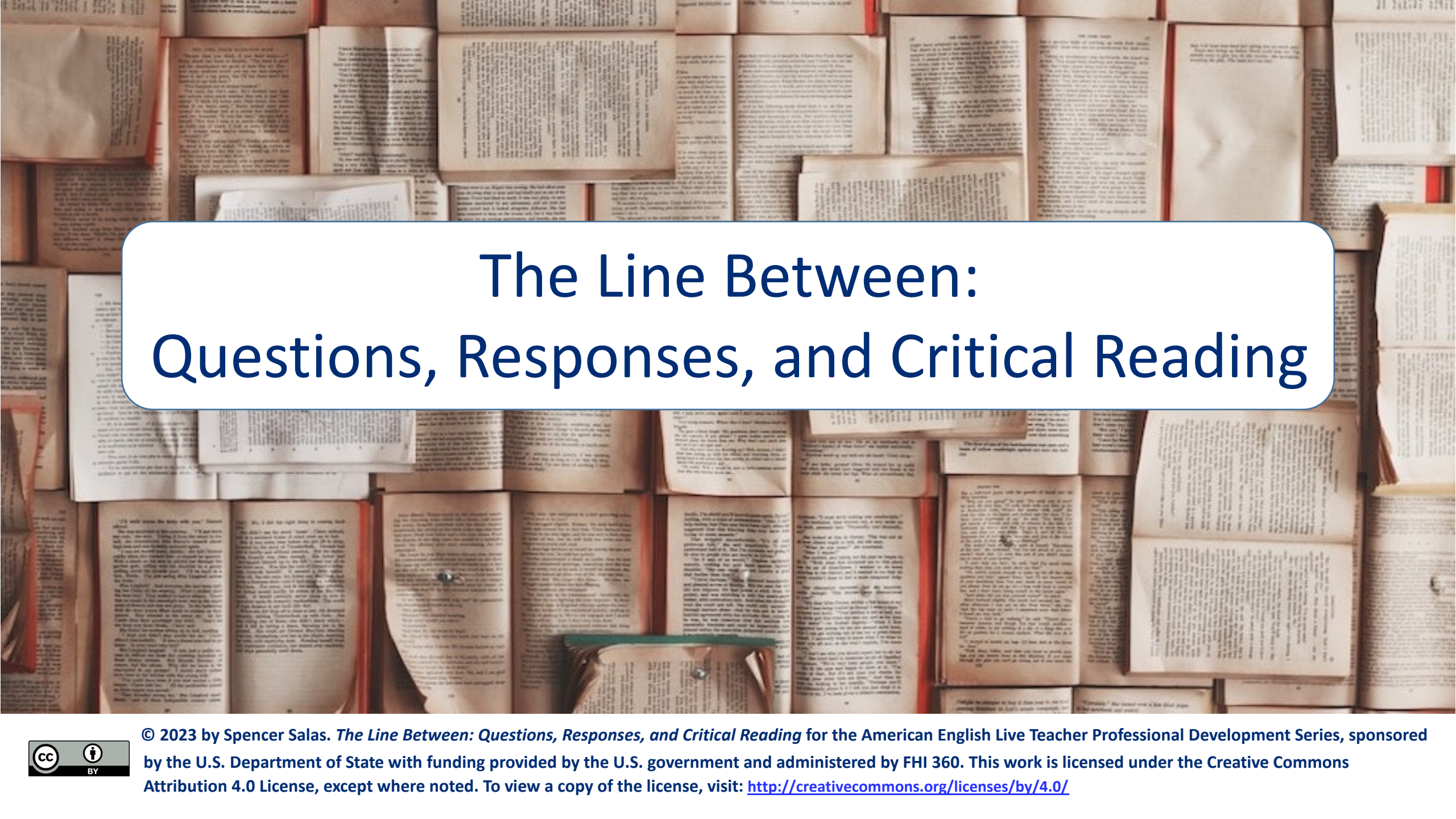
Spencer Salas is a Professor in the Department of Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte where he leads the Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction Urban Literacies/TESL sub-concentration. Among the courses he teaches are Globalization and Teacher Leadership.

He has been a Fulbright Fellow to Romania, Guatemala, and South Africa; and a frequent U.S. Department of State English Language Specialist. He is co-editor of *Vygotsky in 21st Century Society*, *U.S. Latinos and Education Policy*, *Education in the New Latino South*, and *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching, First Edition*.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



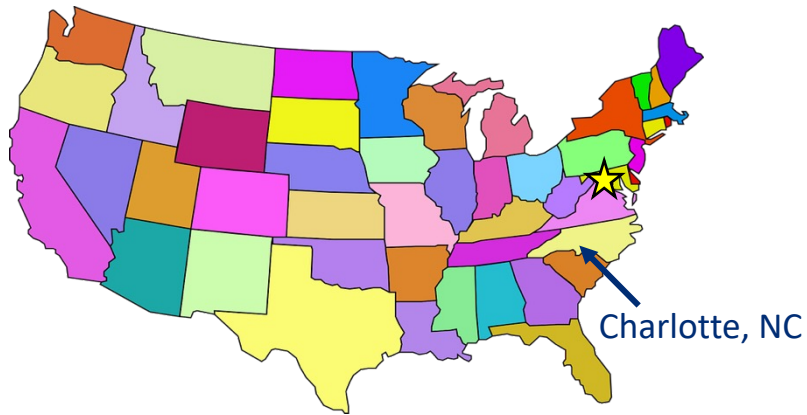


The Line Between: Questions, Responses, and Critical Reading



© 2023 by Spencer Salas. *The Line Between: Questions, Responses, and Critical Reading* for the American English Live Teacher Professional Development Series, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. government and administered by FHI 360. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License, except where noted. To view a copy of the license, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Welcome, Teachers!



The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is a large public institution with an enrollment of 30,000 students.

At the Cato College of Education, our mission is to prepare K-12 teachers for the state and for the nation.

Agenda

- Reflect on the challenges and rewards of the secondary-level literature curriculum
- Examine the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) framework
- Apply QAR to the opening paragraphs of a classic American short story, "The Open Boat"
- Think about why and how we might apply QAR in our classrooms and communities

Reading World Heritage

- Reading a classic in its original form is the gold standard of language learning
- Great books are part of our shared world heritage.
- We're proud of our authors—national heroes who transcend borders and time.



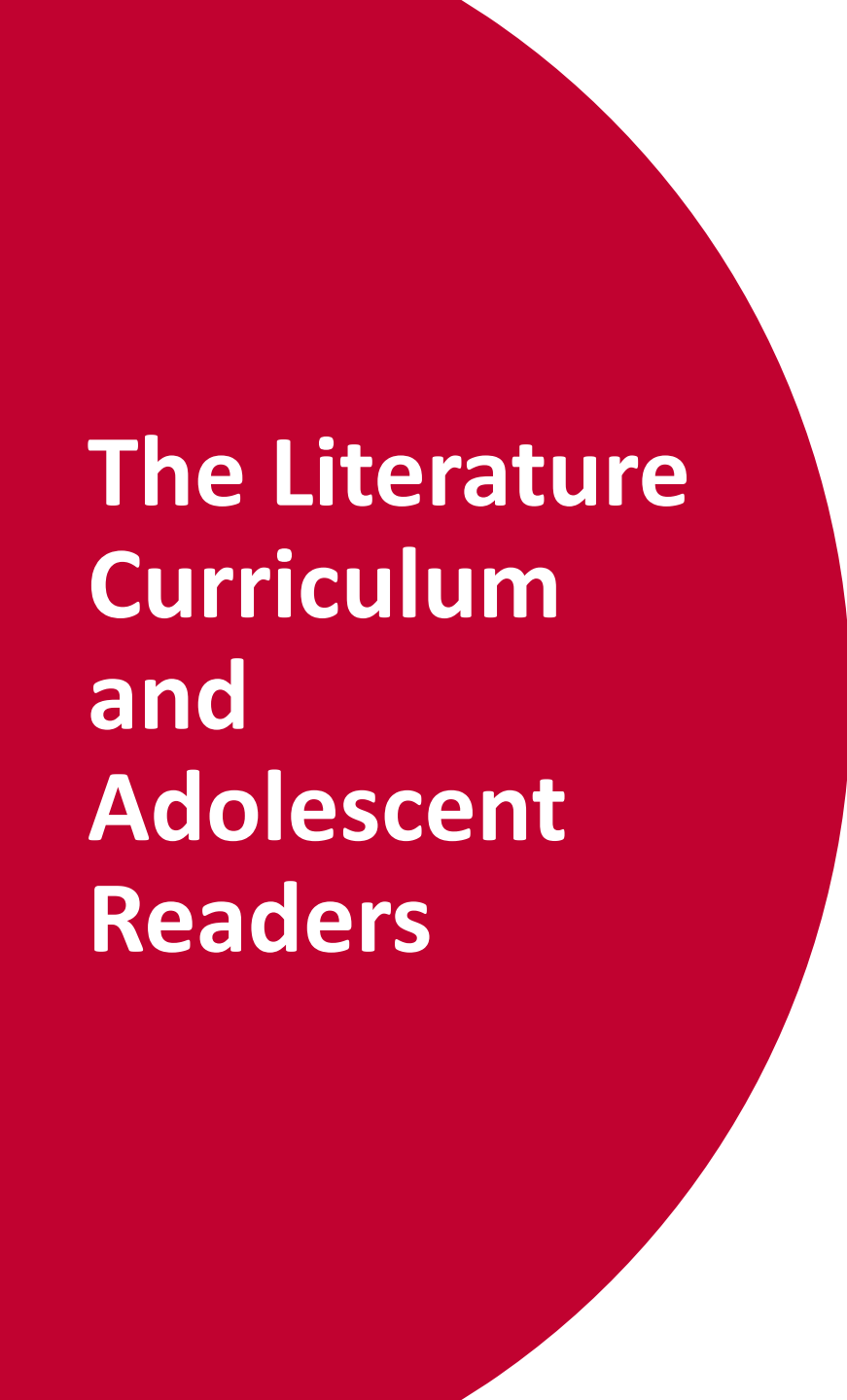
To Get Us Started!

What's a piece of literature that has inspired you?

That you are proud of?

That you'd like your students to read and to know?





The Literature Curriculum and Adolescent Readers

As much as we might love reading, many teens and young adults struggle with studying literature for many reasons:

- In secondary school, we shift from teaching “reading” to teaching “literature.”
- For some students, the classics seem too “old” to be relevant.
- Others may have been labeled—or have labeled themselves—“good” or “bad” readers.

Reading is Complicated

Readers...

- generate meanings around words and messages across sentences.
- use relevant background knowledge, identify textual and rhetorical structures.
- infer, predict, and connect.

It's even more complicated when the text is a "classic."



Struggling Readers

Students who struggle to make sense of texts are likely to struggle throughout their education.

- They often give up on themselves as readers.
- They are often unaware of strategies that can help them understand what a writer is trying to say.

But it doesn't have to be that way!





Strategic Reading

What is a strategy that you use to make sense of a difficult text?



Learning about the Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Approach

We're always looking for new classroom strategies!

- I've collaborated extensively around adolescents' engagement with literature.
 - With Theatre Education colleagues: bringing texts to life through voice, sound, and movement.
 - With Reading Education colleagues: making reading-based vocabulary instruction more student-centered.
- But I hadn't heard of QAR until a couple of years ago.

QAR

- The Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) approach to reading comprehension was developed by Taffy E. Raphael

(Raphael, 1984, 1986; Raphael & Au, 2005; Raphael & Pearson, 1985)

- Once students have a baseline understanding of a text, teachers can use QAR to check for and grow comprehension.
- QAR has long been an important tool for U.S. primary (K-5) teachers but widely unknown in the TESOL community of practice.



It Depends on the Question

Different question types require readers to respond at different levels of conceptual difficulty.

- Some questions ask readers to simply **read the lines**. It's in the text—right there.
- Others ask readers to **read between the lines**—focusing both on what the author says and doesn't say—and what the author means. The answers are not stated explicitly in the text.
- Still others ask readers to **read beyond the lines**—to evaluate, make connections, and think critically about how the text connects to our own experience.

Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)

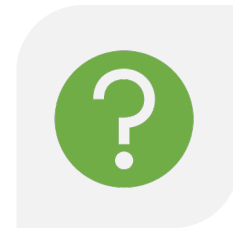
Four Question Types



**IN THE TEXT –
RIGHT THERE
QUESTIONS**



**IN THE TEXT –
THINK AND SEARCH
QUESTIONS**



**AUTHOR AND ME
QUESTIONS**



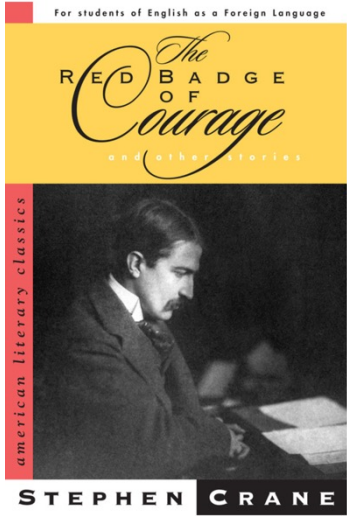
**ON MY OWN
QUESTIONS**

Getting Started with QAR

1. Select a short text.
2. Establish a baseline understanding of the text: background knowledge, vocabulary, syntax, and plot.
3. Then, engage students with QAR question types.

Don't begin with QAR; finish with it.





Stephen Crane, 1871-1900

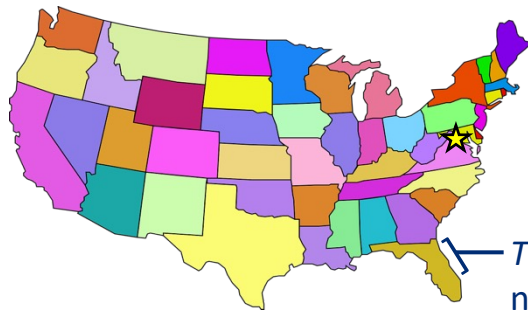
An American author
best known for *The Red
Badge of Courage*.

During the American
Civil War, a young
soldier of the Union
Army, runs away from
the battlefield. He's
overcome with shame.

We read Stephen Crane
in secondary school—
even my dad did.

“The Open Boat”

Between January 2 and 4, 1897,
Stephen Crane was lost at sea
off Florida’s Atlantic coast.



*The Commodore sank
near Florida’s coast.*

https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/the-open-boat.pdf



“The Open Boat”

Four men are drifting at sea in a small boat.

They can see the shore some twenty miles away—too far to swim in the icy winter water.

Thirty hours later, they realize no help will come.

They steer the small boat as close to shore as they can and dive into the rough surf in a desperate attempt to swim to land.

Three of the men survive. Billie washes up dead on the beach—“A quiet and wet shape.”

Your Turn!

**What color
were the waves
rocking the
small boat?**

None of them knew the color of the sky. Their eyes glanced level, and remained upon the waves that swept toward them. These waves were gray, except for the tops, which were white, and all the men knew the colors of the sea. The line between sky and water narrowed and widened, and fell and rose.



Your Turn!

What color
were the waves
rocking the
small boat?

None of them knew the color of the sky. Their eyes glanced level, and remained upon the waves that swept toward them. **These waves were gray, except for the tops, which were white,** and all the men knew the colors of the sea. The line between sky and water narrowed and widened, and fell and rose.



Recap: In the Text - Right There Questions

- These questions require literal comprehension.
- There's a single answer and it's located in the text itself.
- Ready, set, go!



In the Text – Think and Search Questions

- This question type can also reinforce literal comprehension ... the answer is in the text.
- But to respond, readers need to assemble information from different parts of the text.



Your Turn!

Who is in the boat?

The cook sat in the bottom, and looked with both eyes at the six inches of boat which separated him from the ocean. He had bared his fat arms as he worked to empty the water from the boat....

The oiler, guiding with one of the two oars in the boat, sometimes raised himself suddenly to keep away from the water that poured in. It was a thin little oar, and it often seemed ready to break.

The correspondent, pulling at the other oar, watched the waves and wondered why he was there.

The hurt captain, lying in the front, was feeling defeat and despair.



Your Turn!

Who is in the boat?

The cook sat in the bottom, and looked with both eyes at the six inches of boat which separated him from the ocean. He had bared his fat arms as he worked to empty the water from the boat....

The oiler, guiding with one of the two oars in the boat, sometimes raised himself suddenly to keep away from the water that poured in. It was a thin little oar, and it often seemed ready to break.

The correspondent, pulling at the other oar, watched the waves and wondered why he was there.

The hurt captain, lying in the front, was feeling defeat and despair.



Recap: In the Text - Think and Search Questions

- The answer is something the reader puts together from bits and pieces of the text.
- Who's in the boat?
- Slow down!



Reading Between & Beyond the Lines

- The first two QAR question types support **literal comprehension**—understanding what the author has explicitly stated in the text.
- The final two QAR question types to support and build skills for “reading between the lines” and “reading beyond the lines.”



Author and Me Questions

- These questions ask readers to think about the text and about themselves, and to use background knowledge to support comprehension.
- There are many possible answers.
- They often require students to make a judgement or to formulate an opinion in relation to the text.



Your Turn!



- In “The Open Boat” the four men had to weigh the risk of waiting in the boat for help to come versus swimming to shore.
- Do you think the four men make the right decision to swim to shore?
- Why? Why not?



Recap:

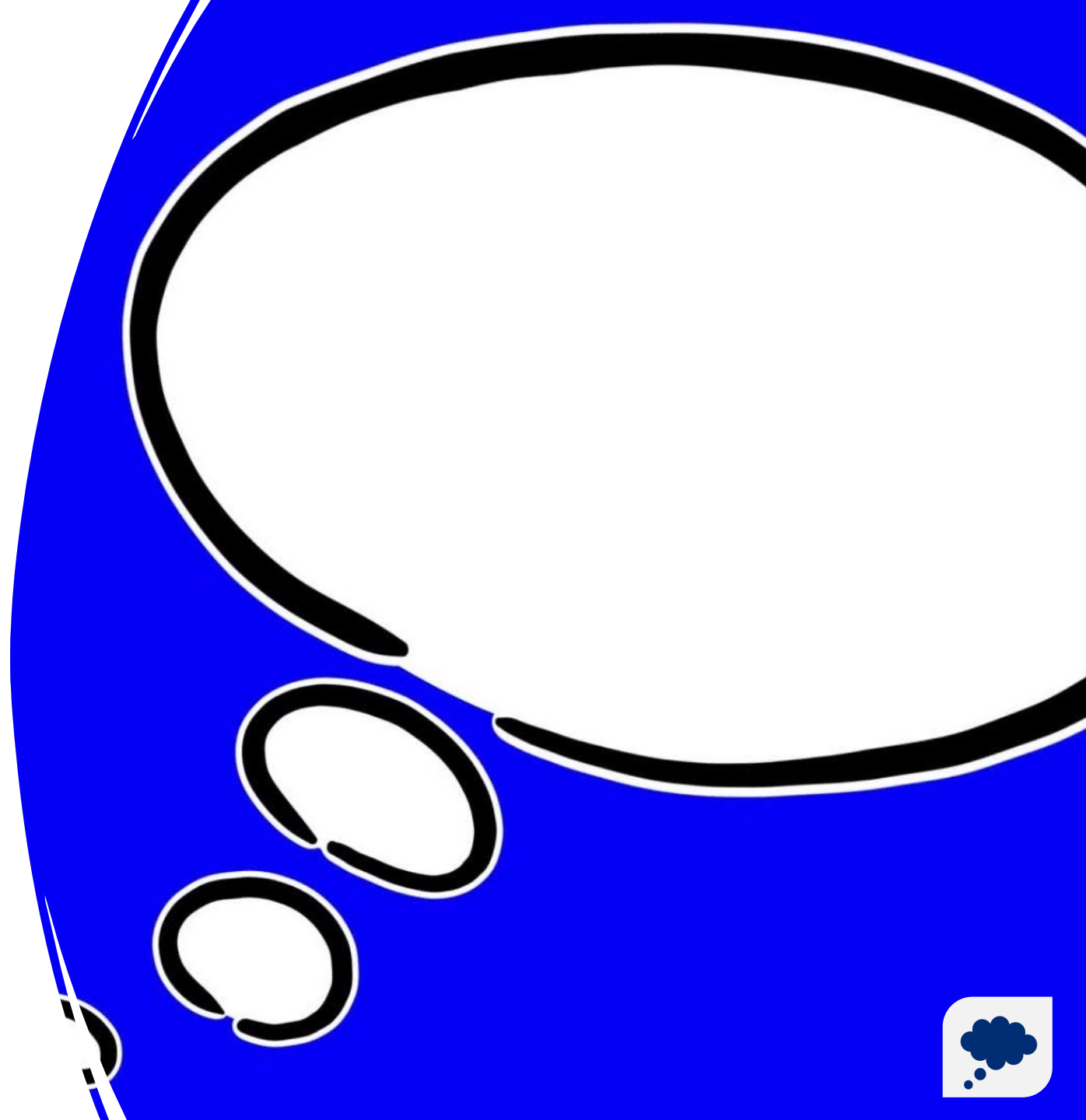
Author and Me Questions

- Answers are reached through mental dialogue with the reading.
- There isn't one "correct" answer.
- Readers find their answers "**between the lines.**"



On My Own Questions

- These questions ask readers to move “beyond the lines,” into their own lives, feelings, dreams, and world(s).
- Students' responses will vary.



Your Turn!

When have
you felt
“lost at sea?”



Recap:





Author and Me Questions

- These questions can be quite personal.
- Again, there is no clear or definitive response.
- They take us “**beyond the lines**” of the text.



Recap: Four QAR Question Types

←--- In the mind ---→
←--- In the text ---→

 RIGHT THERE QUESTIONS	In the lines	skimming, scanning, identifying, locating, naming
 THINK AND SEARCH QUESTIONS	In the lines	skimming, scanning, identifying, synthesizing, sequencing, describing, explaining
 AUTHOR AND ME QUESTIONS	Between the lines	interpreting, predicting, inferring, analyzing, critiquing
 ON MY OWN QUESTIONS	Beyond the lines	connecting, relating, justifying, analyzing, arguing, evaluating

A Question for You!

Which of the four QAR question types would your students be most excited to answer?

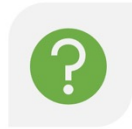
Why?



**IN THE TEXT –
RIGHT THERE
QUESTIONS**



**IN THE TEXT –
THINK AND SEARCH
QUESTIONS**



**AUTHOR AND ME
QUESTIONS**



**ON MY OWN
QUESTIONS**



Classroom Applications

1. Start with a familiar text.



2. Share four question types and four sample questions.



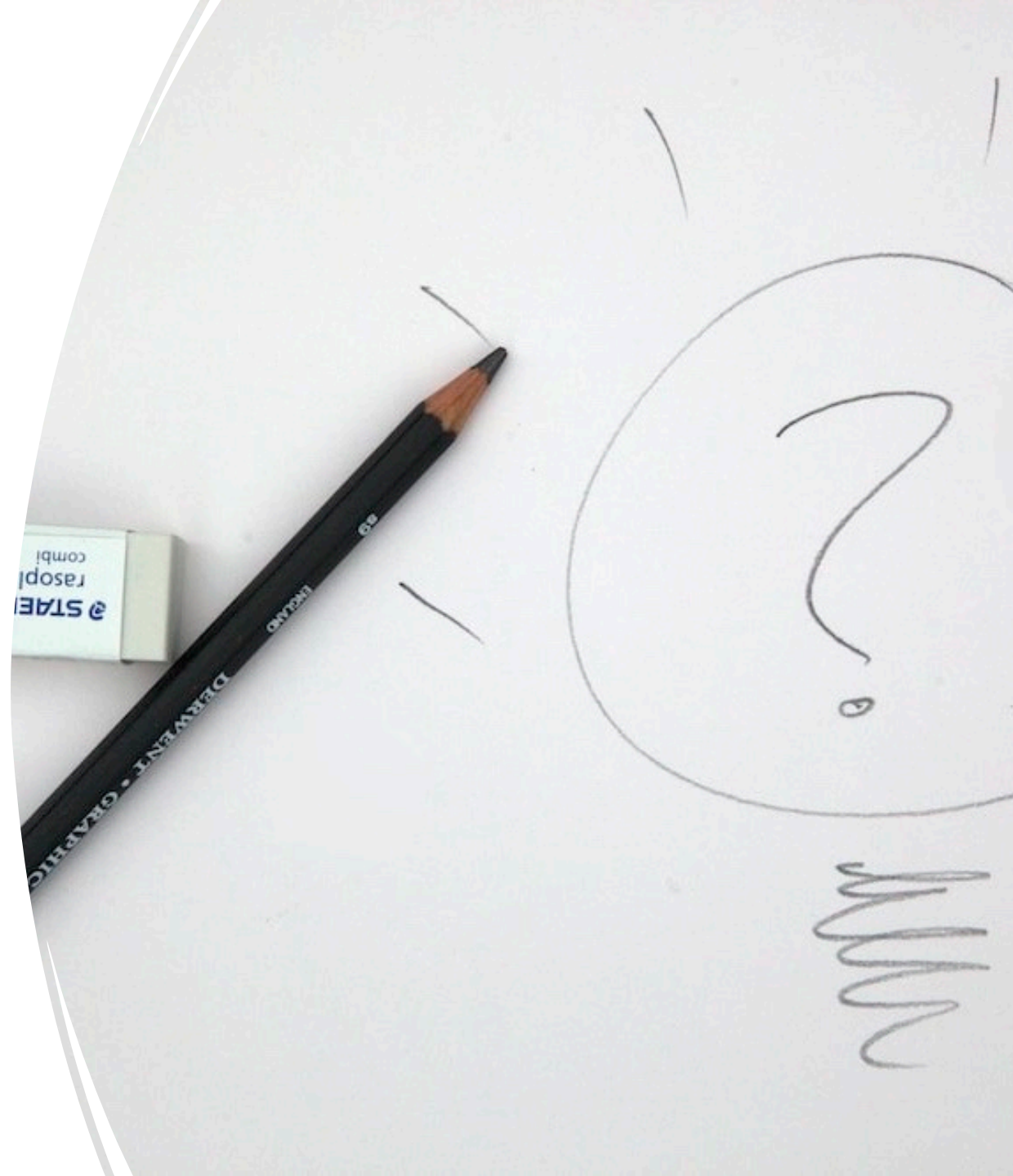
3. Once you recognize the question type, what do you do next?



4. Model thinking out loud.

Students as Question-Makers

- With the same text, have students create their own questions.
- Try them out with the class.
- Provide feedback; adjust the questions as necessary.
- With **Author and Me** and **On My Own** questions, celebrate the possibility of multiple answers.
- Try QAR again with another text.



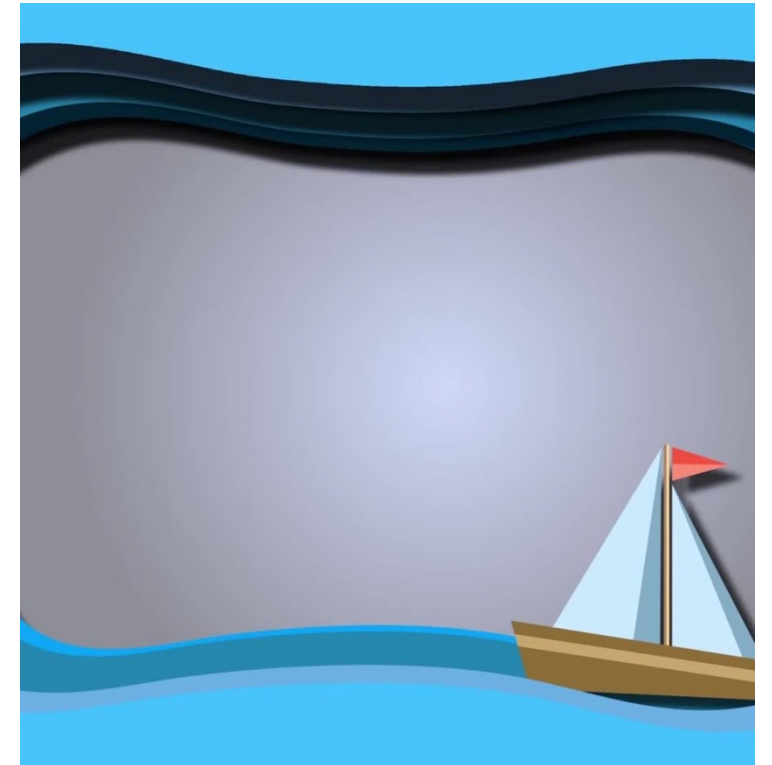
QAR Across Content and Levels

- QAR was developed for primary levels.
- However, we can use it across grade levels and content areas.
- It's one of many strategies we can teach our students to become better readers.



QAR and Reader Confidence

- With “The Open Boat” as an anchor text, we used the Question-Answer Relationship framework to explore four distinct question types.
- Understanding the question types helps readers respond with more confidence.
- They learn when to look **in the lines**, **between the lines**, and **beyond the lines**.
- QAR can reduce testing-anxiety.



QAR as a Rehearsal for Civil Society

In school, students may hesitate to ask questions—or think they don't have the authority or knowledge to respond to questions. Or they may think that only one answer is possible. Or that only the teacher's answer is valid.

QAR makes us better question-makers, more confident in our ability to respond, and more tolerant of the range of responses that our lived experiences inform.

QAR is a rehearsal for participation in civil society—where questions and questioning are so important.



Keep Asking Questions, Keep Looking for Answers

- When we enter a story such as Crane's, we start asking questions—first about words, syntax, and narrative.
- We can all agree that the waves off the Florida coast, per Crane, “were gray, except for the tops, which were white.”
- But what the Crane story means to each of us depends on who we are and who we are still becoming as individuals, as readers, as communities.

That's reason enough to keep reading, to keep asking questions, and to keep looking for answers!

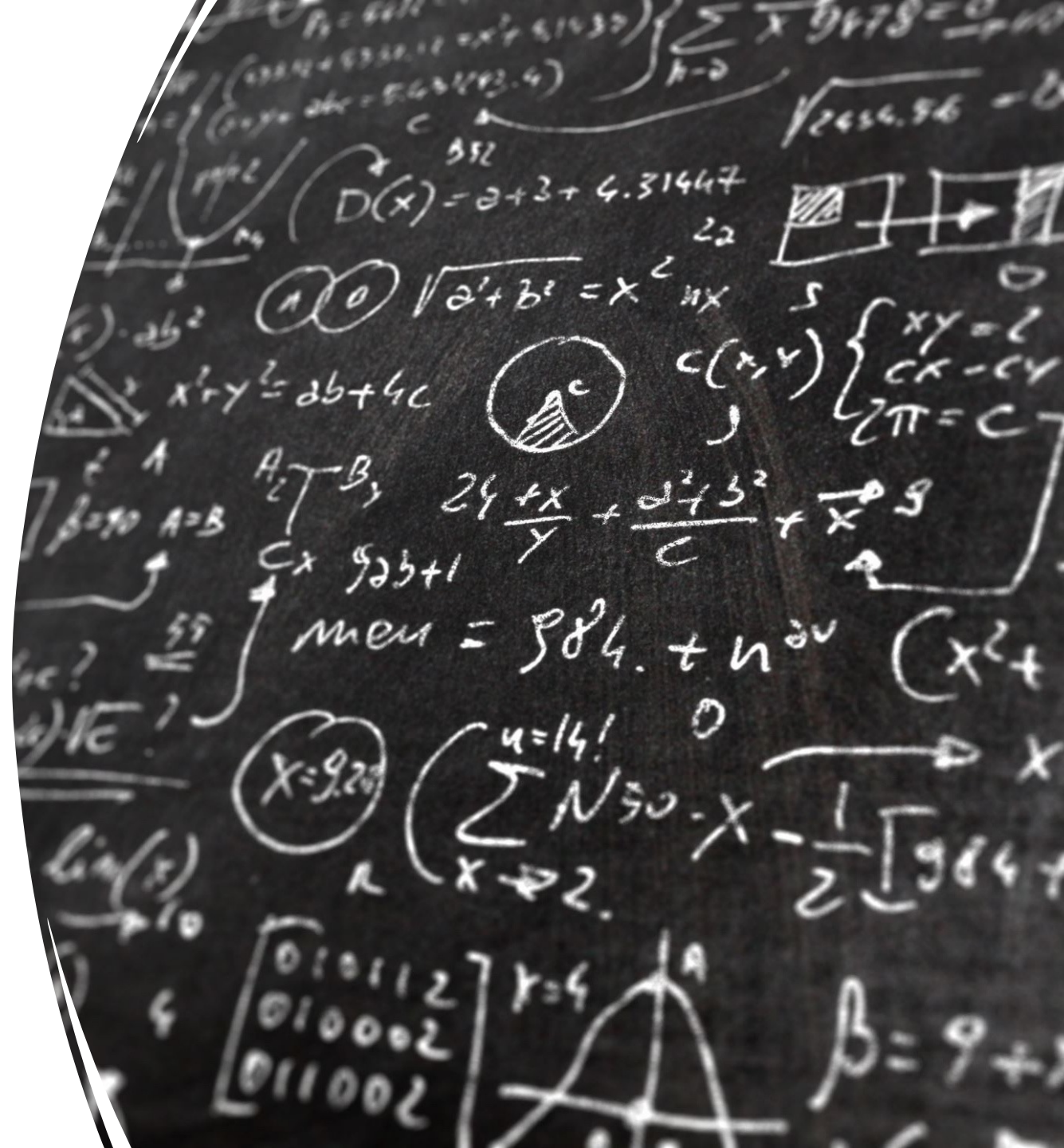
Thank you!

Salas, S., Mraz, M., Greene, S., Williams, B.

“The Line between”: Questions,
Responses, and Adolescent Readers.

English Teaching Forum

...coming soon!



References

- Raphael, T. E. (1984). Teaching learners about sources of information for answering comprehension questions. *Journal of Reading*, 27(4), 303-311.
- Raphael, T. E. (1986). Teaching question answer relationships, revisited. *The reading teacher*, 39(6), 516-522.
- Raphael, T. E., & Au, K. H. (2005). QAR: Enhancing comprehension and test taking across grades and content areas. *The reading teacher*, 59(3), 206-221.
- Raphael, T. E., & Pearson, P. D. (1985). Increasing students' awareness of sources of information for answering questions. *American educational research journal*, 22(2), 217-235.

Thank you!

Questions or concerns?

Email: americanenglishwebinars@fhi360.org

AE Live Webinar Resource Center: <https://openenglishcommunity.org/page/american-english-webinar-series/>

AE website: americanenglish.state.gov

AE YouTube channel: youtube.com/StateAmericanEnglish

AE for Educators Facebook page: facebook.com/AmericanEnglishforEducators

AE Facebook page: facebook.com/AmericanEnglishatState



Reflection Questions

1. What techniques from the webinar or original ideas might you use to introduce the QAR model's four questions to your students?
2. How can you support students in creating their own QAR questions about a fictional text? What activities might you use to help build the habit of “asking questions” about a text when reading?
3. How might you extend or connect some of these QAR reading comprehension question types into activities that involve speaking, listening, and/or writing?



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

